Phoebe's Fair Valentine

"You can't wear that." Nicole gives me a disgust-laced once-over as she walks into my room. "You look like Phoebe-shaped pile of--"

"I do not!" I interrupt before she can finish. My denial doesn't stop me from looking down at my borrowed outfit with serious doubts. I am so fashion-ignorant. Give me a fun t-shirt and pair of jeans any day. Throw in some heavily scuffed Chuck Taylors and I'm a happy girl.

My standard uniform is not, however, the kind of outfit suitable for an important date. *Nothing* in my wardrobe is suitable for an important date. And *tonight* is an important date.

After scouring my own clothes for hours, I'd finally sucked it up and knocked on Stella's door.

Apparently a big mistake.

"I was going to say pile of prep, drama queen," Nicole says, rolling her eyes at my assumption. "Were you going for the mini-Stella look?"

After tossing her messenger bag on my clothes-covered bed, she starts digging through my drawers. I decide not to admit that the lavender cardigan and white satin headband *had* come from Stella's closet. Desperation might have blinded my judgment.

"I need help," I admit, tugging the headband out of my hair. "I'm no good at dressing like a girl."

Nicole throws me a look that says, *Obviously.*

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"I'm freaking out." I shrug off the cardigan and hang it over the back of my chair--Stella

would smote me for sure if I brought it back wrinkled. "Griffin and I only get one first

Valentine's day. I don't want to mess it up."

"Chill," she says with the kind of relaxed attitude only she can bring off. "It's totally

under control."

Standing there in a plain white tee and my one pair of dark wash jeans, I'm glad one of

us has confidence.

***

"Can I look yet?"

"No."

Nicole's face is set in a look of intense concentration. For a girl

whose makeup skills seem to include eyeliner, eyeliner, and more

eyeliner, she seems to be pretty handy with blush brush.

"I don't see why you don't just zap it on," I complained. Sitting

perfectly still with my back to the bathroom mirror is starting to

make me twitchy.

"Let me enjoy my artisticness." She swirls her brush in the sparkly eyeshadow we, er,

borrowed from Stella. Then, holding the brush poised above my eye, she asks, "Unless

you wanted to try your hand at zapping yourself some facepaint?"

I can't see my face, but I'm pretty sure I pale at the suggestion. The memory of my last

powers snafu--where I ended up in a bathtub full of blue Jell-O--don't ask--is still fresh

on my mind. And my toes. I think they're still a little blue around the edges.

"Thought not," she says, then goes back to dusting shimmer on my brow.

I have to trust her. She could totally zap my tongue into a frog if I didn't. Besides, she

has way more style quotient than I ever will. Even if that style is a little heavy on the

punk rock side.

And she managed to find something totally date-worthy in my very limited wardrobe: a

short white skirt from my one attempt at playing tennis (trust me, hand-eye

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coordination and I aren't on speaking terms), a super-soft red v-neck sweater, and the

pair of plain white Keds I'd borrowed from Stella. I feel ready to take on Valentine's day.

Or Venus and Serena Williams.

A few seconds later Nicole leans back, gives my face one last inspection, and

pronounces me done. As I spin around to inspect her work, Nicole says, "Griffin won't

know what hit him."

***

Other than a little glitter excess around my eyes, Nicole has done

an amazing job on my makeup. And my entire look, for that

matter. As I walk her to the door I'm more than aware of how

lucky I am to have a friend like her.

"Thanks," I say as we step out onto the porch.

She shrugs. "No prob."

Nicole is way not into emotional expression. If Mom could get her

on the shrink couch she'd have a field day with repression this and fear of intimacy that.

But I think Nicole has it pretty well together. And I wouldn't with Mom's head

shrinking on anyway.

"Have a great night," she says, bounding down the front steps. Then, before she heads

up the path to school and her dorm, she turns to add, "Don't do anything I would do."

With a wink, she's gone.

I blink at the empty space where she was just standing, surprised that she zapped

herself away. But then I hear the scuffle of footsteps on the path and I know why she

made a quick exit.

Griffin is here.

We've been dating for a few months now, and I should be totally over this butterflies-inthe-stomach stage. But I'm not. I don't think I ever will be. I press my palms to the

tennis skirt so they don't get clammy and watch for him to appear on the path.

Only, he doesn't appear on the path.

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While I'm standing there, waiting, a shadow moves into the light streaming from the

open door behind me. I turn, ready to say something obnoxious to Stella so she'll go

back inside, but instead of Stella filling the doorway I see Griffin. With a giant grin on

his face and a tiny wrapped package in his hands.

***

"Hey," I say, suddenly shy.

"Hey."

Griffin still has that goofy grin on his face that tells me he's just as

excited and nervous and happy as I am. Standing there in a pair

of dark jeans and a water-blue shirt that makes his bright blue

eyes totally glow, even in the fading light of dusk, he looks like

my picture before boyfriend.

"You look very handsome," I say, stepping closer.

He doesn't look away from my eyes as he says, "You look breathtaking."

I blush, not used to those kinds of compliments. Gee, Phoebe, you run fast, yes. But never,

breathtaking. My eyes dart nervously around.

"I'm wearing a skirt," I say stupidly, twisting one leg out to the side.

His bright blue eyes flick down and then right back up. He smiles. "So I see."

"And glitter." I gesture at my eyes. "Nicole put glitter on my--"

"Phoebe."

My eyes widen. "Yeah?"

Closing the two step gap between us, Griffin takes my hand and sets his gift in my

palm. His warm hand still holding mine, he dips his head, looks in my eyes, and says,

"Happy Valentine's Day."

For some silly--girly--reason, that makes my eyes water.

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Phoebe's Fair Valentine

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"Happy Valentine's Day," I whisper back, pulling my gift for Griffin out of the tennis

ball pocket of my skirt. I hold it out and say, “You first.”

***

Griffin looks at the tiny package. "Phoebe, you didn't

have to--"

"I did." I'm not really good at the gift-giving thing, so I'm

a little anxious for him to open it. "Go ahead."

He gives me a little smile before pulling off the ribbon.

My heart is pounding against my chest like I've just run a marathon. I hope he likes it.

Once the ribbon and wrapping paper are off, he lifts off the lid and the layer of tissue

paper inside. Delicately, as if he's lifting an egg from a nest, he takes the pin out of the

box.

"Phoebe, I--" He shakes his head, like he doesn't know what to say.

Definitely a good sign.

"Here," I say, saving him from having to come up with a response, "let me put it on."

While he holds his gift to me, I attach the tiny gold pin that reads "HERO" to the collar

of his shirt. When Mom and I saw this in the tiny village gift shop I just knew it was the

perfect gift for Griffin. For two reasons, I think. One, he's a descendant of the ultimate

hero, Hercules--the only descendant, actually. And two, Griffin's kinda like my personal

hero.

"I love it," he says, laying his hand over mine on his chest.

His blue eyes say even more than words.

"Now it's your turn." He hands my gift back to me. "But I think we need a little more

space before you open it."

I glance at the small package and wonder why he thinks we need space. But, then again,

on this island you never know.

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***

"This should be fine," Griffin says as we walk out onto our favorite

beach.

For a few minutes we just stand there, enjoying the fresh smell of

the Aegean, the soft sand beneath our sneakers, and the total

happiness of the moment. There's something magical about a

beach at night. Something ... eternal.

"Ready to open you present," Griffin asks, inching closer to my

side.

I smile at him, even though he probably can't see it in the faint moonlight. But he can

hear me tear open the wrapping (I've never been a carefully-unwrap-the-gift-withouttearing girl).

"Now, before you pull off the lid," he says, "you might want to aim the box toward the

water."

Although I'm a little nervous about that warning, I'm also a lot excited.

Carefully, slowly, so I don't miss an instant of whatever the gift is going to bring, I peel

back the lid. Before it's even barely open, bright glittering sparks fly out, blinding me

for a second, before darting out over the water. As we watch in awe--because I can so

tell that Griffin is pretty impressed, too--the glittering sparks whirl around, forming a

dense glow, before shooting out in a line. They go up then curve back down once.

Twice. Before returning back to their starting point.

A heart. They formed a heart.

I turn to Griffin, beaming--and trying not to cry like a girly girl--as the sparks glow in a

rainbow of colors. In their bright light I can clearly see his beautiful face.

"It's beautiful," I say, slipping my hand behind his neck and leaning in for a kiss.

I'm shocked when he pulls back.

"There's more," he says, nodding at the books. "Look inside."

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When I look down into the box still clutched in my hand, I see what he means. Sitting

there, on a piece of red tissue paper, is a tiny silver pin that reads "HERO."

I can't help the tears as I wrap my arms around his neck and press my lips to his. What

girl could ask for a more perfect first Valentine's day?

D

If you enjoyed reading Phoebe's Fair Valentine, then you might want to read Oh. My.

Gods. to find out how Phoebe and Griffin got together in the first place, and then find

out what happens next in their story in Goddess Boot Camp. Visit teralynnchilds.com to

learn more about Phoebe, Griffin, Nicole, and everyone on the island of Serfopoula.

While you're there be sure to sign up for TLC's newsletter to get all the good dish first.

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